

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00536 161338Z

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UNCLAS BEIRUT 0536

FOR S/PRS

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: NEWS TRANSMISSION FOR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS IN BEIRUT

REF: STATE 294749 14 DEC 75

1. TELEX SERVICE OUT OF BEIRUT INTERRUPTED. PLEASE TRANSMIT
FOLLOWING NEWS TEXT TO UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL.

2. BEGIN TEXT. CABLES: NO MEDAF PLAY. FOLLOWING

EXUSIS. ROSS. BEIRUT, JAN. 16 (UPI) -- LEBANESE AIR FORCE
PLANES BOMBED THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CHRISTIAN RESORT TOWN
OF DAMOUR FRIDAY IN A LAST-MINUTE ATTEMPT TO KEEP IT FROM
FALLING TO A FORCE OF 4,000 LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS
BESIEGING IT FOR FOUR DAYS, WITNESSES SAID. PARAGRAPH.
THE ENTRANCE OF THE AIR FORCE INTO LEBANON'S NINE-MONTH OLD
CIVIL WAR MARKED A SHARP ESCALATION IN THE FIERCE FIGHTING
THAT RAGED THROUGHOUT BEIRUT AND ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE
OVERNIGHT, CLAIMING AT LEAST 112 DEAD AND 250 WOUNDED IN
THE HIGHEST TOLL FOR 48 HOURS OF VIOLENCE TO DATE. THE
OVERALL TOLL SINCE APRIL ROSE TO 8,600 DEAD AND 18,500
WOUNDED. PARAGRAPH. PALESTINIAN SPOKESMEN SAID SEVERAL
AIR FORCE PLANES BEGAN BOMBING THEIR POSITIONS AROUND
DAMOUR IN THE MORNING. QUOTE WE'RE
REPLYING WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE, UNQUOTE HE SAID.
MILITARY SPOKESMEN WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE FOR
COMMENT BUT FOREIGN WITNESSES CONFIRMED THE REPORT.
PARAGRAPH. IT MARKED THE FIRST INTERVENTION BY THE AIR
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FORCE SINCE 1973 WHEN WAR PLANES BOMBED THE PALESTINIAN

CAMPS AROUND BEIRUT DURING CLASHES BETWEEN THE GUERRILLAS AND THE ARMY. PARAGRAPH. THE ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED AFTER CHRISTIAN SPOKESMEN WARNED DAMOUR'S DEFENSE PERIMETERS WERE CRUMBLING AND ONLY ARMY INTERVENTION WOULD QUOTE STOP THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE MASSACRES TAKING PLACE UNQUOTE IN THE COASTAL TOWN OF 15,000 25 MILES SOUTH OF BEIRUT. PARAGRAPH. PALESTINIAN SPOKESMEN SAID THE TOWN HAD ALREADY FALLEN. CHRISTIANS SAID THEY STILL HELD THE TOWN BUT WERE FIGHTING HARD TO KEEP IT AGAINST A FORCE OF ABOUT 4,000 PALESTINIANS AND MAOUNTAIN DRUZE WARRIORS WHO HAD REACHED ITS NORTHERN OUTSKIRTS AFTER SHELLING IT WITH 800 ROUNDS OF MORTAR FIRE DURING THE NIGHT. PARAGRAPH. FIERCE FIGHTING ALSO RAGED ACROSS BEIRUT AS MOSLEM AND PALESTINIAN FORCES STORMED THROUGH THE JEWISH QUARTER AND INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DISTRICT IN A BID TO REACH THE SEA AND CUT THE BURNING CAPITAL IN HALF. PARAGRAPH. QUOTE IT RAINED ROCKETS AND MORTARS ALL NIGHT LONG IN THE HOTEL DISTRICT. THEY WERE FALLING AT THE RATE OF ONE PER MINUTE, UNQUOTE A POLICE SPOKESMAN SAID. PARAGRAPH. LEFTISTS PEPPERED THE CHRISTIAN-HELD HOLIDAY INN AND HILTON HOTELS WITH ROCKET, MORTAR AND MACHINEGUN FIRE IN A BID TO DRIVE THE CHRISTIANS OUT OF THEIR REMAINING STRHONGHOLDS IN UPTOWN BEIRUT. TWO OF THE MORTARS VEERED WIDE, SLAMMING INTO THE STEPS OF TNE NATIONAL BANK OF LEBANON A FEW YARDS FROM THE UPI OFFICE ON UPTOWN HAMRA STREET. PARAGRAPH. A MORTAR ALSO FELL ON THE JESUIT ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY DOWNTOWN, KILLING THE RECTOR OF ITS DEPARTMENT OF EASTERN STUDIES, FATHER MICHEL ALLARD, POLICE SAID. A SECURITY BULLETING SAID FIGHTING RAGED IN ALMOST EVERY AREA OF THE CITY AND ALONG THE COAST AS FAR SOUTH AS DAMOUR AND AS FAR NORTH AS TRIPOLI 50 MILES FROM BEIRUT. PARAGRAPH. PICKUP 3RD PGH BGNB MOSLEM, ETC. END TEXT. LAMBRAKIS

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